

2.2.6 WILDERNESS

The Wilderness Areas will be managed consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964 (see Appendix A for language of the Wilderness Act). These areas were designated to protect and preserve their natural conditions, exceptional opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and the integrity of the viewshed of the historic emigrant trails. Management of the areas will focus on protecting these values in such a manner as to leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.

Under most circumstances, commercial enterprise, roads, motor vehicles, motorized equipment, motorboats, landing of aircraft, mechanical transport, and structures and installations are not allowed in Wilderness Areas. However, the Wilderness Act allows the BLM to conduct or authorize actions that are generally prohibited by the Act if they are the minimum required action for the management of the area as wilderness. To determine whether a project is the “minimum required” action, a site-specific analysis must be conducted that demonstrates how the project will be required to maintain or enhance the wilderness characteristics (naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and primitive recreation) of the area. The analysis also examines how the project or action will be accomplished and determines which method will have the least impact on wilderness characteristics. This analysis is commonly referred to as the “minimum required/tool analysis.” (Details on how this analysis is conducted are found in Appendix G).

BLM may also use or authorize other agencies to use motorized equipment and mechanical transport in support of emergencies that involve the health and safety of persons within the Wilderness Areas, to meet temporary emergencies involving violations of criminal law, and to protect private property from wildfires.

The following wilderness related objectives and decisions provide broad direction for the protection of wilderness values.

Objectives

- To maintain or enhance the natural and untrammeled character of the Wilderness Areas.
- To provide outstanding opportunities for visitors to experience solitude and to participate in primitive and unconfined recreation, consistent with the preservation of the area’s wilderness character.

Objectives and actions that support wilderness can also be found in the Transportation and OHV Routes, Vegetation, Wild Horses and Burros, Fish and Wildlife, Visual Resources, Lands and Realty, Mineral Resources, Air Quality, Recreation, and Public Outreach and Visitor Services sections of the RMP.

Wilderness Areas Management

WILD-1: The NCA Act closed all “ways” to motorized and mechanized vehicle use within the Wilderness Areas. Closed ways will be managed to maintain natural conditions and will require the occasional installation of barriers at the point where ways enter Wilderness Areas to discourage continued motorized trespass and gates on ways that may occasionally be used for authorized purposes.

Note: This decision does not include the 33 vehicle access routes designated by Congress in the NCA Act as amended and shown on Maps 2-2a to 2-2g, that provide vehicle access to the interior of the Wilderness Areas but are not themselves designated as Wilderness.

Chapter 2 –Management Plan

WILD-2: Wilderness boundaries will be adequately signed to identify boundaries for the public. Signing will be concentrated in areas where motorized trespass occurs, including closed ways and along major boundary roads. To aid in the enforcement of the wilderness regulations some boundaries may require that signs be placed within sight of each other. When trespass problems are reduced signs may be removed to decrease visual impacts. Wilderness boundaries that follow contour lines, surveyed lines or other map-based features that are not near vehicle access routes will be signed only as required to prevent trespass. Signs will be placed at the entrance to each wilderness access route identifying the route as open to motorized vehicles.

Implementation

Note: After completion of the RMP, preparation of a Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) is a priority. During BLM's preparation of the WMP interested publics and agencies will be provided opportunities to participate in and supply input to the planning process. The WMP will contain specific objectives, and outline management actions and monitoring procedures by which the objectives will be accomplished. The WMP will establish the type and level of environmental assessment necessary, including “minimum requirement and minimum tool analyses” for all site-specific management actions.

*Aspen, sage,
and rabbitbrush
in the Lahontan
Cutthroat Trout
WSA*



Wildlife Management

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) has jurisdiction for managing wildlife in the wilderness areas in compliance with Federal wilderness laws, regulations and policies including: the Wilderness Act of 1964, which outlines general management including wildlife management in wilderness; Wilderness Regulations found in 43 CFR 6300, which further specify what actions are prohibited and how BLM is to manage wilderness areas; and BLM Manual 8560 and Handbook 8560-1, that provide policy guidance for specific wilderness management issues. Chapter III of Handbook 8560-1, which was written in conjunction with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, provides guidance for specific wildlife management actions in wilderness. To streamline the “minimum required/tool analyses” process, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in December 2003 by NDOW and BLM.

Chapter 2 –Management Plan

This MOU provides guidance and procedures applicable to any wildlife actions proposed to occur in BLM administered Wilderness Areas in the State of Nevada. The MOU provides for BLM and NDOW to hold annual meetings to review the previous year's accomplishments and identify projects proposed for the coming year. Proposed actions requiring site-specific, "minimum required/tool analyses" will be identified at the operations meetings. (See Appendix H for the complete text of this MOU; and see section 2.2.12, "Wildlife Management in Wilderness" for a more detailed description of this topic.)

LCT Area Management

LCT Area-1: The inventoried units with wilderness character within the LCT area and other public lands included in the LCT Area as shown on Map 2-3 will be managed consistent with the recovery of the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, to maintain surface water quality in the LCT Area and to retain wilderness character.

LCT Area-2: In the LCT area, with specified exceptions, the following activities are not allowed:

- Commercial enterprises
- Construction of permanent roads
- Construction of temporary roads
- Use of motor vehicles off designated routes
- Mechanical transport off of designated routes
- Use of motorized equipment
- Landing of aircraft
- Construction of structures or installations

Exceptions to these prohibitions are:

- Valid Existing Rights. Prior-existing rights may continue. New discretionary uses that create valid existing rights are not allowed.
- Administrative Activities. The BLM may use any of the above activities if it is necessary to meet the minimum requirements to administer and protect the important values of the LCT Area and to protect the health and safety of persons within the area.
- Other General Allowances. Subject to limitations determined by the State Director, general allowances may include: 1) actions necessary to control fire, insects, and diseases, 2) recurring Federal mineral surveys, 3) established livestock grazing, and 4) commercial services (such as outfitter and guides) to the extent necessary for activities that are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness character purposes and compatible with the defined values, and adequate access to non-Federal lands.

Note: During preparation of the RMP, a wilderness inventory was conducted on ten units of acquired lands totaling 1,092 acres inside the existing Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Wilderness Study Area. This inventory found that all ten units, when considered with the existing WSA, contained wilderness characteristics (see inventory results in the FEIS/RMP Section 3.6.2).

During the comment period for the Draft Plan, the Department of the Interior settled a lawsuit with the State of Utah. The settlement in *Utah v Norton* acknowledged that the BLM's authority to conduct wilderness reviews, including the establishment of new WSAs, expired no later than October 21, 1993, with the submission of the wilderness suitability recommendations to Congress pursuant to Section 603 of the FLPMA; and that the BLM is without authority to establish new WSAs and to manage any additional lands under the Interim Management Policy. The settlement did not, however, diminish BLM's authority under Section 201 of the FLPMA to inventory public land resources and their other values, including

Chapter 2 –Management Plan

wilderness characteristics. The BLM may continue to consider information on wilderness characteristics when preparing land use plans, and wilderness characteristics may be managed to protect or preserve some or all of those characteristics. Therefore, while the settlement rescinded BLM's authority to designate the acquired lands as part of the LCT WSA, BLM has determined that these inventoried parcels do have wilderness characteristics.

LCT Area-3: Vehicle travel in the LCT Area will be limited to motorized trails shown on Map 2-3.

LCT Area-4: If monitoring indicates that impacts are occurring to the spawning habitat of the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, appropriate motor vehicle restrictions will be implemented in the LCT Area. These restrictions may be seasonal or permanent closures of trails. Where practicable, BLM will also construct hardened stream crossings where motorized trails cross streams in the LCT Area.



*Springtime
cottonwoods
along the
boundary of the
South Jackson
Mountains
Wilderness*



*Canyon walls
reflected in the
East Fork of High
Rock Canyon
Wilderness*